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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TIGERS HEARING A TOUGHER LINE

Classified By: AMB. JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD. REASON: 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Norwegian Ambassador Brattskar delivered an unambiguous message to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) political chief Thamilchelvan: Tiger violence is jeopardizing the peace process, undermining the Norwegians' credibility as facilitators, and angering the international community. Ambassador Lunstead underscored the same message to a visiting delegation of pro-LTTE MPs. While it is always difficult to tell how faithfully these unpleasant messages are conveyed to the Tiger leadership, the chorus of voices from the international community is getting too loud for the LTTE to ignore. End summary.

¶2. (C) NORWEGIANS TALK TOUGH: Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar September 29 described to Co-Chair Chiefs of Mission (US, Netherlands, Japan, EU) his discussion the previous evening with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Political Chief Thamilchelvan. (Thamilchelvan was in Colombo departing for Europe with the LTTE delegation heading to Switzerland for consultations with Tamil diaspora figures and visits to European capitals.) Brattskar said he had decided to talk to Thamilchelvan "only about political killings" in order to give an impact to his comments. The talks, he said, "started pleasant, but ended strained."

¶3. (C) Brattskar told Thamilchelvan that the LTTE needed to consider three points regarding the recent spate of political killings of LTTE opponents: a) the influence on the peace process; b) the effect on the perception of the LTTE in the outside world; and c) the effect on the roles of Norway and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). On the first point, Brattskar told Thamilchelvan the violence was causing difficulties in the South and was encouraging sub-groups to become active. On the second, the image of the LTTE around the world was suffering. Brattskar drew Thamilchelvan's attention to a recent move by some Danish opposition parties to have the Tigers declared a terrorist organization. Brattskar also told him that it was increasingly difficult for the Norwegians to arrange meetings for the LTTE delegation with foreign governments, and that the group should be prepared to receive some strong messages. Finally, the violence was making life difficult for the Norwegians and the SLMM. (See below for details.) The two parties--the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) and the LTTE--had given defined roles to Norway and the SLMM in the Cease Fire Agreement. The Tigers were not respecting that agreement and making it impossible for the Norwegians and the SLMM to carry out their work.

¶4. (C) Thamilchelvan seemed "taken aback" and had little to say in response to his, according to Brattskar. He feebly tried to blame some of the violence on activities of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), but Brattskar told him that the general perception was that the LTTE was seen as responsible for the great majority of the violence.

¶5. (C) Brattskar told COM's that Norway would not go public with this criticism, since they had to preserve openness with the LTTE. He said that he had also told Thamilchelvan that the Norwegians would like to meet with LTTE supremo Prabhakaran. Acknowledging that this might not be possible for security reasons, he made the point that what he had said should be transmitted to Prabhakaran. He told COM's that the Government of Norway was considering sending a letter to Prabhakaran to ensure that he received the message. He said the LTTE group intended to travel to Oslo, Helsinki, Berlin, Vienna, Dublin, Copenhagen and the Hague after their Geneva meeting.

¶6. (U) Brattskar had discussed with Ambassador the day before, and repeated for group, his continuing troubles with the EPDP. (EPDP was a Tamil insurgent group which joined the political process in the late 1980's. Its leader, Douglas Devananda, is a leading Tamil opponent of the LTTE, and is a Minister in the ruling UPFA government. He was the target of the LTTE suicide bomb attempt in July.) EPDP members have been the victims in a number of recent LTTE assassinations. After the most recent assassination, EPDP members staged an almost-hysterical demonstration in front of the Norwegian Embassy, placing the coffin of the most recent EPDP victim in front of the Embassy gates, where it remained for several hours. Devananda also sent a letter to Brattskar (a copy of which he sent to Ambassador), in which he accused Norway and

the SLMM of "turning a blind eye to the terrorism of the LTTE," and concluding that Norway and the SLMM "must give assurances that such political killings by the LTTE would not be permitted in the future. Otherwise the consequences would be dire." Devananda had made similar comments to the local press.

¶7. (C) Brattskar said he had spoken to Devananda and told him the atmosphere which he was whipping up was dangerous and that the last sentence in his letter seemed to be a threat. He also questioned how a member of the ruling Government would issue statements at odds with the official government position. Devananda (who is as weaselly as they come) admitted that the Norwegians/SLMM had no ability to enforce the ceasefire or prevent the killings. He claimed that he had not intended to threaten anyone. Finally, he said that he had spoken as the leader of the EPDP, not as a member of the Government. Brattskar also called Foreign Secretary Palihakkara to complain. Palihakkara was rather dismissive of the issue, stating that Devananda was under severe pressure from within his party. Ambassador met Palihakkara on the evening of September 29 and stressed to him that we also saw this as a serious issue, and that implied threats to diplomats and supporters of the peace process were extremely disturbing. Palihakkara seemed to take the matter more seriously, and said that the Government was trying to put some pressure on Devananda to tone down his rhetoric. Devananda subsequently sent a follow-on letter to Brattskar, stating that his mention of "dire consequences" in his first letter referred to the danger to the peace process if the Norwegians/SLMM did not "take effective measure to put an end to the killings by the LTTE."

¶8. (C) TNA MEETS THE AMBASSADOR: On September 30 the Ambassador met with Tamil National Alliance (TNA) representatives Joseph Pararajahsingham, Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam and S. Gajendran. (Note: The pro-LTTE TNA holds 22 seats in Parliament. Ponnambalam and Gajendran are MPs from Jaffna; Pararajahsingham is a National List MP from Batticaloa.) The TNA representatives blamed President Chandrika Kumaratunga for the stalled peace process, claiming that her preoccupation with her own political future was diverting her attention from the peace process. The MPs recited their familiar, if factitious, mantra of the LTTE having already demonstrated sufficient flexibility by declaring itself ready to come back to the table as soon as the President announces she accepts its proposal for an interim administration as the basis for resumed dialogue. All other problems, including the violence in the East, will subside as soon as talks recommence, they claimed. While not denying that political assassinations continue, the MPs lamented "uneven" criticism from the international community, which, they claimed, castigated LTTE violence while turning a blind eye to purported GSL complicity in EPDP-orchestrated killings. The international community, including the U.S., should put pressure on the President to resume dialogue as soon as possible, they concluded.

¶9. (C) Everyone agrees that dialogue should resume, the Ambassador replied; that has consistently been the USG position, both in its public statements and in its private dealings with the GSL at the highest levels. Both sides need to be flexible and work to create a conducive environment for talks, he said, adding that some of the LTTE's recent public pronouncements have been particularly unhelpful. For example, the LTTE has not done enough to dispel the popular perception in the south that the Tigers refuse to consider any GSL counter-proposals for an interim administration--that their "proposal" for the Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) is essentially an ultimatum. While President Kumaratunga's personal commitment to the peace process does not seem to be in doubt, she is politically hobbled by her dependence on the Sinhalese nationalist Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP), he noted. Realizing that, the LTTE should be willing to give her a little political maneuvering room by being more visibly flexible on the ISGA and by ceasing violence, he said.

¶10. (C) The LTTE's continued campaign of political assassinations is absolutely unacceptable and is jeopardizing the entire peace process, the Ambassador stressed. The Tigers' persistent violence raises real doubts about their legitimacy as a negotiating partner on a par with the GSL, as well as their ability to run any administration in a just manner, he warned. "How can we accept the Tigers as the head of an (interim) administration when their method of dealing with political opponents is to murder them?" he asked. Moreover, he emphasized, child recruitment and other human rights violations by the LTTE persist. The Tigers will remain on the Foreign Terrorist Organizations list as long as they continue terrorist tactics like the July 7 suicide bombing, he reiterated. Only once they renounce violence in word and deed can they begin to enter the political mainstream.

¶11. (C) THE GSL VIEW: Presidential advisor Mano Tittawella

told DCM September 30 that President Kumaratunga remains very interested in getting back to the peace table as soon as possible. Mano said he had communicated this indirectly to LTTE political chief Thamilchelvan while he was in Colombo this week enroute to Europe. Tittawella noted, however, that the President is hesitant to make a bold announcement or take a bold step since she is not convinced that the LTTE is ready to resume. Thus, Tittawella commented, "She does not want to get everything lined up on this, get the JVP on board and all that, and then have the LTTE decide it's not ready. She needs a green light from the Wanni (LTTE headquarters)."

¶12. (C) Comment: The LTTE appears to believe that it can get away with systematically violating the ceasefire--and eliminate its remaining political opposition along the way--because the peace process is too important to the international community and the GSL for them to jeopardize by complaining too vigorously about LTTE assassinations. Brattskar's frank words, coupled with the Ambassador's own tough message, should put the Tigers on notice that they are gravely miscalculating if this is their assumption. We will continue to urge our colleagues in the diplomatic community to reinforce this message.

LUNSTEAD